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SUBJECT: ISRAELI FM LIVNI'S DECEMBER 5-6 VISIT TO PARIS

REF: A. PARIS 7684

[1](#)B. WALLER-DANIN E-MAIL OF DECEMBER 7

Classified By: CDA Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Israeli FM Livni had a fairly terse exchange with FM Douste-Blazy on the status of the Sheba Farms and the need for the Palestinians to explicitly accept the Quartet principles. Douste-Blazy, to the surprise of his MFA underlings, asked Livni to consider entering into secret talks with the Siniora government regarding Sheba Farms. In turn, Livni asked President Chirac to consider enunciating a French position on the "right of return" that might encourage greater realism in the Arab world. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On December 8, Israeli PolCouns Ella Aphek (protect) provided us a readout of FM Tzipi Livni's visit to Paris on December 5-6. Aphek characterized the visit as having been even "more substantive" than the Israelis had hoped, and noted with pride her own role in salvaging a meeting between FM Livni and President Chirac after Israeli Ambassador Shek and presidential foreign policy advisor Maurice Gourdault-Montagne (MGM) had concluded that the meeting would have to be dropped due to scheduling conflicts. (Aphek turned to Dominique Boche, Chirac's advisor for the Middle East, who helped to identify a time-slot on the morning of December 6. Aphek said Boche, who previously served in Israel, understood the importance of "investing in Livni" as one of the few major Israeli political figures committed to reviving the peace process.)

Security Package Missing in Action

[1](#)3. (S) Before seeing Chirac, Livni met with Israeli Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy. To her surprise, Douste-Blazy did not broach the question of Israeli overflights of southern Lebanon. (Although Chirac subsequently raised the issue, Aphek said he did so in a fairly pro-forma manner.) Even more surprisingly, neither Douste-Blazy nor Chirac made any reference to the long-awaited "security package" that they had promised to share with the Israelis in the hope of reducing the need for continued overflights. Although Livni did not press the French on the status of the package, the Israelis were puzzled by the French silence on this issue. (Comment: We note that, as per Ref A, MGM conspicuously failed to mention the status of the French security package during his December 1 meeting with U/S Edelman, even after Edelman volunteered that the U.S. was still actively considering possibilities for increased information-sharing with the GOI in order to address the overflights issue. As per Ref B, we continue to assess that the French decided -- prior to Livni's visit -- to suspend movement on the package

for fear it would be seen as a provocation by Hizballah/Syria. End comment.)

A Divergence on Sheba Farms . . .

14. (C) Livni and Douste-Blazy did, however, have a polite but pointed argument over the Sheba Farms. Douste-Blazy led off with the standard French talking points, claiming it was essential that Israel strengthen PM Siniora in the eyes of the Lebanese public by signaling a willingness, at some future date, to negotiate the status of the Sheba Farms with the GOL. Livni pushed back, noting that the ultimate status of the Sheba Farms would be resolved in the context of comprehensive peace negotiations, adding that Israel had insisted that UNSCR 1701 contain a reference to UNSCR 242 for that very reason.

15. (C) Douste-Blazy then suggested that Israel consider opening secret talks on Sheba Farms with representatives of PM Siniora. Livni gave an equivocal response. Following the meeting, MFA DAS-equivalent for the Levant Herve Besancenot told Aphek that he was surprised by Douste-Blazy's suggestion, which he suggested must have occurred to the French Foreign Minister on the spur of the moment. "How secret could the talks be considering that the Minister made

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the suggestion in front of twenty-five people?" an incredulous Besancenot asked Aphek. Aphek, while not discounting the possibility that the idea had simply popped into Douste-Blazy's head during the course of the conversation, wondered whether Chirac had instructed Douste-Blazy to float the suggestion as a trial balloon. Aphek noted that she would probe this idea further during a December 9 meeting with Boche.

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. . . And on Quartet Principles

16. (C) Turning to Israeli-Palestinian relations, in Aphek's account, Livni and Douste-Blazy proceeded to have a "frank exchange of views." (The MFA's desk officer for Israel, Pascal Lemaire, used the same characterization.) Douste-Blazy argued that it was a mistake for PA President Mahmoud Abbas to abandon efforts to form a national unity government (NUG), adding that Abbas' apparent decision to focus his energies on strengthening Fatah was a recipe for civil war. Douste-Blazy also took issue with Israel's insistence that a NUG explicitly accept the three Quartet principles, arguing that an implicit acceptance should suffice. Livni pushed back, saying that Abbas had told the GOI that European back-tracking on this point had seriously undermined his negotiating position vis-a-vis Hamas. "It was quite an argument," Aphek summarized.

17. (C) In contrast, during Livni's subsequent meeting with Chirac, the French President remained in listening mode while Livni shared her analysis of Israeli-Palestinian affairs. Livni then asked Chirac to consider nudging the Arab states to a more realistic position on the question of the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees by asserting that France foresaw the eventual creation of a Palestinian state as a homeland for the Palestinians, whereas Israel would remain a homeland for the Jews. Aphek said Chirac appeared intrigued by this idea and indicated a willingness to discuss it further with Livni, even asking whether she could extend her stay -- prompting his advisers to object that his schedule would not permit an additional meeting in the immediate future.

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